

## **NHSBT Board Meeting – 26 November 2020**

### **Written update from Northern Ireland**

#### Introduction of an Opt Out System for Organ Donation

On 22 July 2020, Minister Swann issued a press statement announcing his intention to hold a consultation in the autumn on policy proposals for the introduction of a soft opt out system for organ donation. Work is progressing on this issue in collaboration with NHSBT and it is anticipated that a consultation will launch in the near future.

#### Promotion

Since the NI Organ Donation Promotion Manager took up post during the summer, she has developed links with local charities, local councils and other statutory bodies to develop a draft annual plan for the coming year to promote organ donation.

A collaborative approach to Organ Donation Week was developed, working with the Department of Health, Public Health Agency, NHSBT, Trusts, charities and local councils, which led to a very successful week despite the current restrictions due to the pandemic.

Overall there was a fivefold increase on traffic to the NI Organ Donation web page and an uplift in the number of registrants on the Organ Donor Register. In addition, there was widespread coverage on social media channels.

#### Transplant Service

Unfortunately, due to the pandemic, the kidney transplant service in Belfast has been temporarily paused, other than for highly sensitised patients for whom it is extremely difficult to find a suitable match.

Whilst the position is likely to remain extremely challenging for the foreseeable future, the Minister has been clear in his intention to sustain elective and essential services as far as possible, and to maximise the use of any available theatre capacity across the system as soon as we begin to emerge from the current peak in COVID-19 hospital admissions.

In light of this, any resumption of transplant surgery potentially requires alternative locations to be explored and robust plans developed which satisfy all of the relevant safety, staffing, licencing and accommodation criteria which need to be met in the delivery of such services. The Department has tasked the Health and Social Care Board and Trusts with the development of proposals to facilitate decisions on the safe resumption of kidney transplant services as soon as possible and this work is under way.

Despite the current position, the Department of Health confirmed Northern Ireland's commitment to participate in the October matching run as part of NHSBT's Live Kidney Sharing Scheme, with most transplants set to take place between December 2020 and January 2021.